

I would like to file a comment relative to Docket No. 02-60 (Rural Health Care Support Mechanism) on behalf of Mayo Foundation. I apologize that this may be too late as the comment period ended July 1, 2002.

Mayo Clinic Rochester, Minnesota has an significant presence in rural Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin. Many of Mayo's affiliated clinics and medical centers in these states serve patients in rural communities covered by the 1997 Universal Service Order. All of Mayo's primary and secondary medical facilities are connected to other Mayo sites for computer services via communication technology. These rural network links, as recognized by the 1997 Service Order, are costly to maintain but are necessary to provide computerized support for the rural clinics and hospitals.

Mayo has contracted with an outside firm to assist in the submission of required paperwork to receive the communications discounts. Mayo has received significant discounts for year three and expect even more significant discounts for year four and year five.

Because we use a consultant for submission, I can't comment directly on the process of submission but do know that it is a lengthy and time consuming process. Any assistance in streamlining this process would be helpful.

In summary, our medical sites in Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota may have already commented on the proposed rule changes and we at Mayo Clinic Rochester would like to offer our support for this very important and worthwhile funding endeavor. We very much support telecommunications cost relief for rural healthcare providers and have to-date received benefits from this mechanism. Thank you so much for allowing comments and hope that other Mayo Clinic sites have taken advantage of this opportunity.